



THE FRAG

2D Recon Battalion Association Newsletter Spring 2024

Greetings Marines, Corpsmen, and Recon Families,

I hope this finds all of you doing well. Spring is beginning to break out here in my home in middle Tennessee, which tells me that our annual reunion is coming up soon. Reunion details are included in this issue.

Yesterday, my phone began blowing up with news that Gen. Al Gray, 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps, passed away at age 95. (See article that follows).

Mike Graham has reinstated the Memorial Brick campaign. Purchased bricks will be placed at the entrance of battalion headquarters, along with those previously placed.

Also included is a book that I found to be a real “page turner,” *Killing the Killers* by Bill O’Reilly and Martin Dugard. This book describes actions of U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Global War on Terror. My old friend from Bravo 1, Jim Flannery, gave me this book when he came from Pennsylvania to coyote hunt this past winter.

I would like to thank those who keep our Association running: Brian Broadhurst, Vice President; Michael Graham, aka “Grambo,” Minister of Morale; Dave Leathers, Treasurer; Jerry Newland, Membership; Burnie Matthews, Secretary; and John Actis, Historian, and members at large, Pablo Arroyo and Dutch Bertholf.

Wayne Dillon

President

In Memoriam



General Alfred M. "Al" Gray

Gen. Al Gray, the 29th commandant of the Marine Corps, died Wednesday in his home following an extended period of hospice care.

The 95-year-old New Jersey native rose from private to four-star general, leading the Corps during the fall of the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf War.

Retired Lt. Gen. George Flynn, who serves as his power of attorney, confirmed that Gray died at 12:57 a.m. from health complications in his Alexandria, Virginia, home where he had been under hospice care.

Gray served as commandant from 1987 to 1991, retiring after 41 years of military service. During his tenure and in retirement he was widely beloved by Marines both in and out of uniform.

The former commandant remained closely tied to Marine initiatives, programs and organizations such as the Marine Corps Association and Foundation, the Semper Fi Fund, the Potomac Institute and various Marine unit functions and events.

Gray enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1950 and commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1952, according to his [official biography](#). His early tours were with 11th and 7th Marine Regiments, 1st Marine Division in Korea.

He later saw service in Vietnam where his actions on May 14, 1967, resulted in his being awarded the Silver Star Medal.

Gray was serving as the commanding officer of the Composite Artillery Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, according to his Silver Star citation. That night three Marines on their way to a listening post entered a heavily mined area by mistake. (cont'd.)

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One of the Marines was killed when he detonated a mine, which also injured his fellow Marines.

Maj. Gray and another Marine rushed to the mined area and cleared a 40-meter path through the unmarked field. Gray guided stretcher-bearers in as he moved one of the injured Marines and began rendering first aid.

General Gray and 2d Recon Battalion Association

In November, 2020, our Association dedicated a monument to our fallen Marines and Corpsmen at Quantico, Virginia. A project that was estimated to take up to three years was accomplished in less than a year, due to the diligent efforts of several of our members.

The Guest of Honor was Gen. David Berger, 38th Commandant. Many of us knew him as Lieutenant or Captain Berger during the Gulf War period.

Rumors began circulating that Gen. Gray would make an appearance; however, the big day of the dedication came, but no confirmation. About a half hour before the ceremony was to start, one of the members came to me and said, "Al Gray is here!" I found him sitting on a stone wall, just observing. I went and introduced myself to him. I also asked, "Are you going to punch me again?" (His trademark was a punch on the shoulder, and he could hit!) He just smiled and said, "Not this time." We chatted for a few minutes, and then he said, "You'd better go take care of the real Commandant." I replied, "General, you will always be the 'real Commandant' to us!" I believe this sentiment is shared by every Marine who served under him in 2d Marine Division, which he commanded during Beirut, or the Gulf War, when he was our Commandant.

Another Al Gray story, which though not verified, is certainly believable. When the headquarters of BLT 1/8 was bombed on 23 October, 1983, 2d Battalion, 2d Marine Regiment was on air alert, meaning they had to be at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point in just a few hours, ready to fly in to reinforce 1/8. Supposedly, Lt. Gen. Gray, commanding 2d Marine Division, said, "I wouldn't send 2/2 to guard the Seven Day Store" and instead, sent 2d Battalion, Sixth Marines. This continued to sting the Marines of 2/2, the "Warlords," so much that during the Gulf War they sent Al Gray a picture from Kuwait with several of them posing in front of a small store, with the caption, "2/2 Guarding the Seven Day Store." Again, maybe it's an "urban legend," but from what I know of Gen. Gray, it's likely true. And given his sense of humor, I bet he got a laugh out of it!

Battalion Leadership



LtCol. Damon A. Doykos

Hailing from Sacramento California, LtCol Doykos was appointed a midshipman in the United States Naval Academy Class of 2005. Upon commissioning, LtCol Doykos reported to The Basic School and graduated the Infantry Officer's Course in April 2006.

LtCol. Doykos assumed command of the battalion in June of last year. He has significant reconnaissance and infantry experience, as well as special operations experience, including serving as a reconnaissance platoon commander and as a member of 1st and 3d Raider Battalions.

LtCol Doykos is married to the former Madonna Toomey of Chicago, IL and has two daughters and a son. due in August of 2023. His hobbies include shotgunning and rugby. LtCol Doykos was a member of the 2007, 2008, and 2009 U.S. Marine Corps Rugby Teams and shot on the 2014, 2015, and 2016 U.S. Marine Corps Skeet Teams.

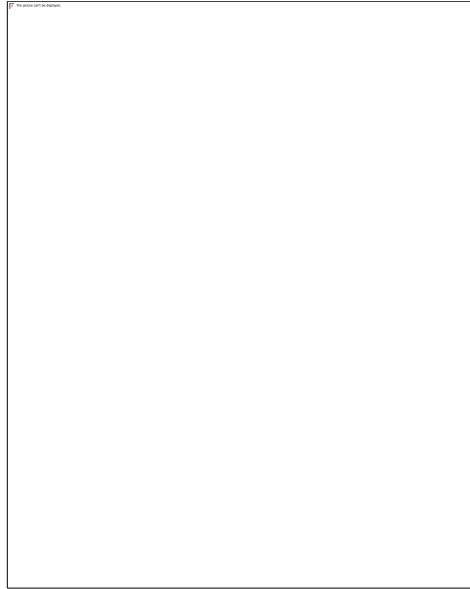
LtCol Doykos's personal awards include the Bronze Star Medal with gold stars in lieu of second award, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with gold star in lieu of second award, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, and the Combat Action Ribbon with two gold stars in lieu of third award.

We look forward to meeting him and his family at the reunion, where LtCol. Doykos will be our Guest of Honor.

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Battalion Leadership



SgtMaj. Brent Sheets

Sergeant Major Brent R. Sheets is a native of North Carolina. He enlisted in February 2002 and underwent recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island South Carolina, followed by Marine Combat Training at Camp Geiger, NC. Upon Completion of initial training, he attended Motor Transport Operators course, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

SgtMaj. Sheets had significant combat experience, having served and was decorated for his actions in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. He also deployed several times to the Pacific area, as well as serving as a drill instructor at Parris Island.

Sergeant Major Sheets is married and has two sons. His personal awards include the Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (one gold star), Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (combat 'V' and three gold stars) and the Combat Action Ribbon (one gold star).

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Battalion Leadership



Master Gunnery Sergeant Scott Young

Scott Young, the outgoing Battalion Operations Chief, is a native of Orange, California. He enlisted in 2000. After the usual boot camp and infantry training, he was assigned as an infantryman to 1st Battalion, 4th Marines. He went on to serve in all the Reconnaissance Battalions and in I MEF Force Reconnaissance Company, as well as several instructor billets. He served multiple tours in Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM, as well as in the Pacific Theater. He is qualified as a sniper, static line and freefall jumpmaster, and as a dive supervisor.

Scott and his wife, Robin, have three children, Velouria, Jacob, and Logan. He will be leaving the battalion this summer to serve at Headquarters Marine Corps in Quantico.

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Battalion Leadership



Master Gunnery Sergeant Rick Smith

Master Gunnery Sergeant Smith, a native of DuBois, Pennsylvania, joined the Marine Corps in 2002. After completing boot camp and infantry training, he served as a rifleman and team leader with Lima Company, 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, serving in Iraq with Task Force Tarawa.

After serving his penance in the infantry, Rick went to 2d Recon Battalion, and that's where the fun started. He went on to serve with 1st and 2d Recon Battalions, 2d Force Recon Company, and as a Sniper Instructor at Quantico and with III MEF.

For his performance while serving as a team leader with 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, in Al Anbar Province, Iraq in 2007 he received the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with a Combat Distinguishing Device "V" for actions as team leader, and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for receiving the prestigious "Holberton Award" for being named 2007 Team Leader of the Year.

An interesting fact about MGySgt. Smith: He speaks Dutch! He served as an exchange officer with the Netherlands Royal Marines Special Operations Squadron.

He and his wife, Laura, have three children: Logan, Weston, and Charlotte.

The Silent Drill Platoon



If you've ever seen the Silent Drill Platoon perform, as I have several times, you know it is a sight to behold. The precision and bearing of these Marines are something to marvel at. Several years ago, I was privileged to get a backstage tour of the Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, known as "8th and I," the "Oldest Post of the Corps." A friend of mine, SgtMaj. Dave Phillips (now deceased) was then serving as the first sergeant. Dave has been a drill instructor, a valuable background to have when you're running a place whose whole mission in peacetime is drill and flawless performances.

My neighbor is a retired Special Forces Command Sergeant Major. He sent me a photo of the Silent Drill Platoon performing at a Tennessee Titans football game, with the remark, "Marines are good at two things—marching and killing!"

When I was stationed at Twentynine Palms, we were watching the Silent Drill Platoon perform on the grass parade deck in front of the Commanding General's building. I heard two Marines behind me talking. Marine #1: "What happens if one of them drops his rifle?" Marine #2: "He's carrying a machinegun in the grunts the next day."

I mentioned that drill and performances are their peacetime mission. The Silent Drill Platoon also has a combat mission. As all their members are infantrymen, they have periods of combat training when not performing. During the Gulf War, the Platoon was sent to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to provide command post security for, if I remember correctly, 2d Marine Division. I knew one of their staff NCOs, GySgt. Black, and was surprised to see him and his men in combat uniforms.

If you have never seen the Team perform, I would highly encourage it. During the summer, they are the centerpiece at the Tuesday and Friday evening parades at the Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, and event that has been held since 1957. To see the schedule and make reservations, go to <https://www.barracks.marines.mil/>

Reunion 2024



Our reunions just get bigger and better all the time! Plan now for the upcoming reunion, which will be held 27-30 June 2024. We have a group rate of \$156.00 per night, which must be reserved before 27 May.

The general plan is to check in to the Hampton Inn Sneads Ferry, NC, on Thursday, 27 June at 1500. Friday will be our day with the battalion to burn their ammo, give awards, eat barbecue, etc. and conduct our membership meeting. Saturday is an open day for visiting the beach, base, etc. until our dinner at the Officers Club in the evening. Sunday is pack up and retrograde.

Important Note: There is no “menu pricing” for the reunion, meaning that members cannot pick and choose what events they pay for. All these logistics must be locked on and paid for *months in advance*.

Registration is now open on the Associations website at <https://www.2dreconbn.org/>. Also on the website is the link to the Marine Corps Installations East website to register for base access for those who do not have qualifying credentials, such as a retired ID card. Scroll down to the event “2024 Recon Reunion.”

To make your reservations, call the Hampton Inn at 910-327-5555. Don’t delay!

Book Review

Killing the Killers

The Secret War on Terrorists

Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard

Killing the Killers, as its title suggests, is about the actions of U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) who conduct actions to kill or capture terrorists. Beginning with the killing of Osama bin Laden and his son, I found the book captivating. Though the Reconnaissance Battalions and Force Recon Companies are not categorized as SOF units, who work for the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) the selection, training, and skill sets are very similar. Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) are denoted as MEU(SOC)—with the SOC standing for Special Operations Capable.

While Marine Special Operations Command's Raiders are mentioned, most of the stories are about the Tier I operators such as Delta Force, U.S. Army Special Forces* and SEALs*, units that have been around much longer than MARSOC, which was formed in 2003.

Killing the Killers is available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble and numerous other bookseller sites.

*Not all these units are Tier I assets. Tier I units are highly secretive. For example, of the SEALs, only SEAL Team 6 is a Tier I asset.

MEMORIAL PAVERS

ORDER NOW!

From Michael Graham on the 2d Recon Battalion Association Fan Page on Facebook:

Memorial Pavers. Making another run of Memorial Pavers. These are 8”X8” Paver Bricks. They are \$100 to sponsor one for our Fallen and those that have passed on. These are being installed at the Battalion (all of the ones for our fallen and several that have passed on are already installed) The pavers that are installed will have Text only and No Bn Logo. If you want a Paver for your own enjoyment or to give to the Wife or Family, these will have the Bn Logo. You can also order a four-brick array with the Bn logo (picture below) for \$200. This ordering period will be for one month (April 15-May 15 2024) Use the link to make your donation to the Association. These Paver Bricks to take home must be picked up at the reunion, as they cannot be shipped individually. PM me with an email address and I will send you an order form. The Bricks can have the Bn logo along with five lines of 20 text.

To order your brick, go to the Association’s website: <https://2rba.memberclicks.net/>

Michael Graham can be contacted at recondiver8653@yahoo.com

Offsites

Memorial Day Weekend: This get together in southwest Indiana is held Memorial Day weekend annually. Site has 131 acres of woods with a 16-acre lake, shooting ranges, fishing, cabin bunks, shower, disco ball, 8-track tape player, and world-class outhouse. If interested contact Wayne Dillon at 931-561-2575 or leatherneck75.wd@gmail.com.

Spring Sawmill Shootout: To be held the weekend of 12-14 April at Frank Seaman's Virtue of Defense tactical shooting facility in the beautiful western North Carolina mountains. Contact Frank at 828-442-7404 or vodtac@gmail.com if interested.

Supporting our Community

Scholarships

Two scholarships are available to Association members and their dependents. The Larry Ashton Memorial Scholarship, administered by the Ashton family, is dedicated to supporting those who are studying to work as health professionals. The Association administers a general scholarship. The deadline for these scholarships is 15 August. For more information, contact Wayne Dillon at leatherneck75.wd@gmail.com.

Community Support

The Association has recently been able to provide financial to the partner of a deceased member, as well as helping a member who had suffered some financial challenges due to a hospitalization which impeded his ability to work. Like all the Marines I've talked to in this situation, he was very humble and said he had a hard time asking for help. I assured him that it was a grant, not a loan, but he insisted that he pay it back. This seems to happen every time! It speaks well to the character of our Marines.

Membership



Jerry Newland is our Membership Chairman. Connect with Jerry with any questions or issues you may have.

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